

BEFORE
THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
DOCKET NO. 91-063-C - ORDER NO. 94-600 ✓

JULY 6, 1994

IN RE: Request for Extended Area Service from) ORDER
Ridgeland Customers in Beaufort County) APPROVING
to Beaufort.) TARIFFS

This matter comes before the Public Service Commission of South Carolina (the Commission) by way of tariff filings by United Telephone Company of the Carolinas (United), Bluffton Telephone Company, Inc. (Bluffton), and Hargray Telephone Company, Inc. (Hargray). These tariff filings are in response to and in compliance with the Commission's directives in Order No. 93-173 dated February 26, 1993, issued in this Docket.

In Order No. 93-173, the Commission addressed a request from Mr. Walter Baxter (Mr. Baxter) where Mr. Baxter requested a hearing to address the Commission's decision in Order No. 92-695 dated August 21, 1992. Order No. 92-695 approved converting the telephone service of all Beaufort County residents receiving service from United on the Ridgeland Exchange to the Beaufort Exchange. Briefly, the underlying facts of Order No. 92-695 and Order No. 93-173 are as follows:

1. On May 30, 1991, United filed a tariff proposing to convert the telephone service of its Beaufort County customers residing on Calawassie and Spring Islands from the Ridgeland Exchange to the Beaufort Exchange. This

tariff was filed after United balloted the residents of these islands and received unanimous approval of the proposed conversion.

2. At approximately the same time, the Commission received a petition signed by all residents of Red Bluff Island in Beaufort County requesting service from the Beaufort Exchange.

3. On June 18, 1991, the Commission received a resolution from the Beaufort County Council supporting service from the Beaufort Exchange for all United customers residing in Beaufort County. On the same day, the Commission approved United's tariff, effective July 1, 1991, converting the telephone service of residents of Calawassie and Spring Islands to the Beaufort Exchange.

4. On July 18, 1991, the Commission received a petition from some residents of Beaufort County, served by the Ridgeland Exchange, who opposed conversion of their telephone service. Thereafter, the Commission reviewed additional letters from other Beaufort County residents requesting the conversion of their service from the Ridgeland Exchange to the Beaufort Exchange.

5. On March 31, 1992, the Commission issued Order No. 92-235 approving the June 1991 petition of the Red Bluff Island residents to convert their service from the Ridgeland Exchange to the Beaufort Exchange.

6. On June 1, 1992, the Commission instructed the Commission Staff (the Staff) to ballot each of the Ridgeland

Exchange subscribers residing in Beaufort County to determine their interest in having their telephone service converted to the Beaufort Exchange. The Staff mailed 194 ballots, and 144 of the ballots were returned. The responses of the Ridgeland subscribers residing in Beaufort County were virtually evenly divided between those who supported the conversion and those who opposed the conversion.

Order No. 93-173 affirmed Order No. 92-695, which granted the conversion of service from the Ridgeland Exchange to the Beaufort Exchange for United customers living in Beaufort County, and also addressed Mr. Baxter's request for a hearing. In addressing Mr. Baxter's request for a hearing, a compromise was reached among those in favor of conversion, those opposed to conversion, the Staff, and United. This compromise provided that the customers residing in Beaufort County then on the "726" Ridgeland Exchange would be converted to the "521" Beaufort Exchange effective July 1, 1993. In addition and simultaneously with the conversion on July 1, 1993, United would implement two-way toll free calling between the converted customers, including residents of Red Bluff Island, and all customers in the "726" Ridgeland Exchange. This calling was on a "1+" with 0- billing basis from July 1, 1993, to July 1, 1994. Effective July 1, 1994, this toll free dialing will be on a seven digit basis. This plan would result in no cost to the Ridgeland "726" customers and would result in only regrouping rates to the converted customers. Further, United was ordered to implement full digital switching in the Beaufort and Ridgeland Exchanges on or before July 1, 1994. Also, United, Hargray, and

Bluffton were ordered to undertake a study of the calling needs of the Jasper County and Beaufort County area, and to submit a plan by July 1, 1994, to address the findings of the study. The tariff filing before the Commission today are the plans to address the findings of the study.

The plans submitted by United, Bluffton, and Hargray are identical except for the price. United's plan provides for a flat rated \$0.12 per minute rate for calls within Jasper County and Beaufort County but that are outside a customer's local service area. Bluffton and Hargray propose to extend their "876" plans to encompass Beaufort and Jasper Counties. Additionally, these calls will be seven digit calls.

In recognition of the previous petitions and balloting processes undertaken in this Docket and pursuant to the findings and directives of Order No. 93-173 and based upon the compromise approved in Order No. 93-173 and as stated above, the Commission believes and so finds that approval of the tariffs as filed by United, Bluffton, and Hargray are in the public interest and are in response to the directives of Order No. 93-173. Therefore, the Commission hereby approves the tariffs filed by United, Bluffton, and Hargray in compliance with Order No. 93-173.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:

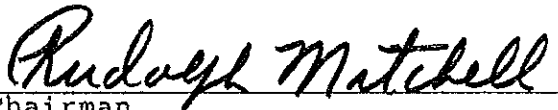
1. The tariffs filed by United, Bluffton, and Hargray are approved as filed.
2. The effective date of the tariffs shall be July 1, 1994.

JULY 6, 1994

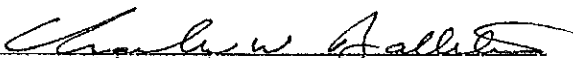
PAGE 5

3. This Order shall remain in effect until further Order of the Commission.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION:


Chairman

ATTEST:


Executive Director

(SEAL)